

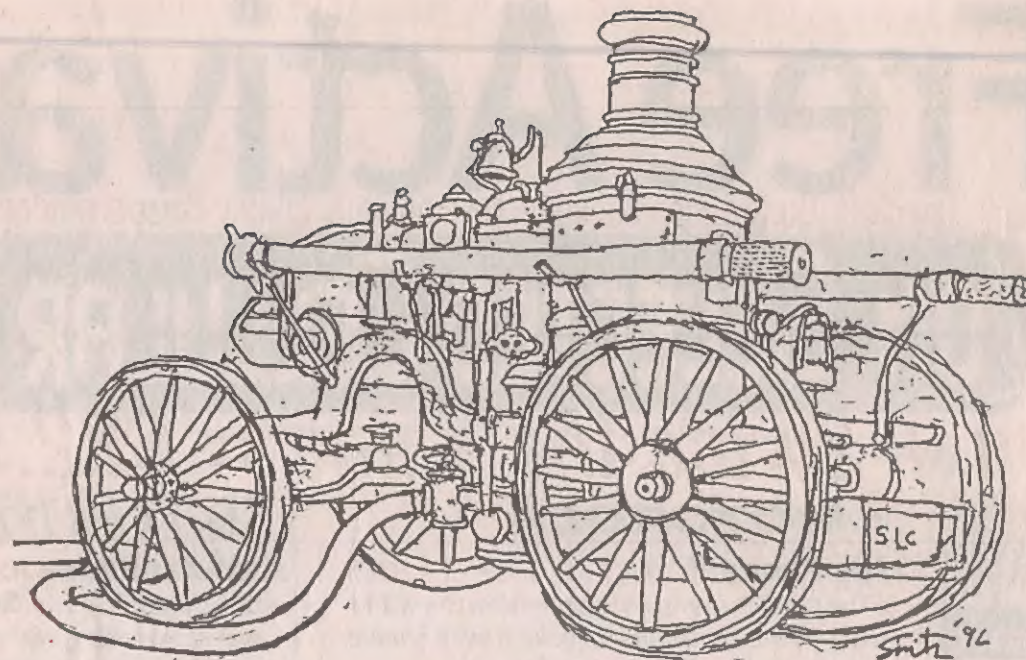
Restorers bring old 'Roosevelt' back to her former glory

Demonstration shows firetruck used in S.L. from 1902-1919 can still pump with the best of them.

By Dennis Smith Fri 7-12-96

Veloy and I happened to be in Provo the day the Centennial steamer fire engine came through town. Originally purchased by the city of Salt Lake in 1902, this breathtaking example of Victorian engineering and design served the city until 1919, at which time it was retired to become a display at Liberty Park for the next five decades.

Over the years it was tarnished and torn by the effects of weather and vandalism, until 1972, when it was rescued by the International Society of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers and placed out of the weather in the basement of the DUP's newly built Carriage House Museum. Another 20 years went by. Then in 1994 the museum's director, Edith Menna, and a dedicated fire en-



gine lover, Brent Palmer, decided to restore it.

Dismantled piece by piece and hauled out of the basement, it was taken to the Bountiful City Fire Department, where, as a Utah Statehood Centennial project, extensive restoration work was begun. Over a period of two years, with countless man-hours of loving labor by many people and at a cost of \$125,000, the old American LaFrance pumper has regained her original splendor. There are 22,125 individual parts to the old

engine, of which over half had to be completely remade. But on June 15 of this year the restoration was completed, and the newly refurbished steamer was dedicated in honor of Utah's firefighters. It is now on a statewide tour as part of local centennial celebrations.

On the day we saw it in Provo, the fire engine was slowly being driven through town on the bed of a specially outfitted semi-trailer, accompanied by a fanfare of firemen and a contingent of historical firetrucks

filled with local kids. The handsome old steamer, whose hundreds of polished fittings gleamed in the sun, was carefully rolled off the track and set up for a demonstration in the parking lot east of the pioneer museum.

We had to leave for an hour, but by the time we came back, the steamer's caretakers had the firebox stoked up and she was running at full throttle, shooting a broad stream of water across the parking lot, where several dozen kids were rollicking under its cooling spray.

I have often seen pictures of old steamers like this and had never thought much about them, considering them to be fairly ineffectual machines compared to the massive red and yellow fire trucks of today. These old steamers have an almost whimsical shape and a lightness of bearing. I was surprised to learn, however, that this old engine No. 1, which was named the "Roosevelt," weighed over 5 tons and is capable of pumping over a thousand gallons of water a minute!

I watched as the firefighters struggled to keep the portable metal trough from which the pumper guzzled water from hoses hooked up to modern hydrants.

Wok-i-ta, wok-i-ta, wok-i-ta, wok-i-ta . . . the polished cylinders casually danced on their rockers from steam fed in from the boiler nestled above the firebox, where a fireman stoked the fire with a new hunk of coal from time to time.

Psssh, psssh, psssh, psssh . . . tiny wisps of air escaped from the sides of the cylinders. The old steamer was barely straining,

DENNIS SMITH

ntic antiques fair
t — from Queen Mum

means they are nasty little fakes.”
The fair’s statement continued:
“Specialists are of the opinion that
the vases date from the 19th cen-
tury and were made by the cele-
brated Samson factory.”

Samson, known as “Samson the
Imitator,” established a factory in
Paris in 1845 devoted to producing
replacements and exact copies of
sought-after ceramics.

“There was a large amount of re-
producing of works in the 19th
century and a lot of collectors who
looked for examples of earlier
works,” said a spokesman for
Sotheby’s.

“Samson was dispatched to pro-
duce copies. They weren’t made
fraudulently. Samson often used to
incorporate an ‘S’ in the mark to
give a clue that the piece was not
an original. But at some point the
marks might have been removed,
and then it becomes difficult to tell
the original from the copy.”

— Dan Glalster

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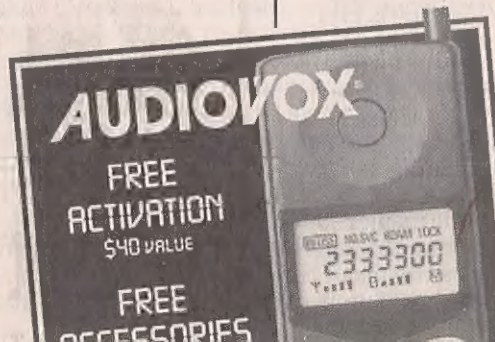
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